United Nations E/AC.51/2013/L.4/Add.3

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
20 June 2013
English
Original: French

Committee for Programme and Coordination
Fifty-third session
3-28 June 2013
Agenda item 7
Adoption of the report of the Committee on its fifty-third session

Draft report

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Addendum

Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015
(*Item 3 (a)*)

Report of the Secretary-General on consolidated changes to the biennial programme plan as reflected in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015

Programme 15
Economic and social development in Africa

1. At its 17th meeting, on 17 June 2013, the Committee considered the report of the Secretary-General on consolidated changes to the biennial programme plan as reflected in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015 (A/68/75).

2. The Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) introduced the programme and responded to queries raised during the Committee's consideration of the programme.

Discussion

3. Support and appreciation were expressed for programme 15, Economic and social development in Africa, contained in the report on consolidated changes to the biennial programme plan as reflected in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015 (A/68/75). Views were expressed that the changes proposed adequately reflected the framework overwhelmingly endorsed at the forty-sixth session of ECA, held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, on 25 and 26 March 2013, and that

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ECA was embarking on an ambitious and challenging agenda which required the full support of Member States. Member States expressed their support for the restructuring of ECA to make it more effective. The structure was well organized. It was part of Africa's renaissance and represented what the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) wished to see. The context of the nine subprogrammes fully reflected the concerns of the African Union.

4. Views were expressed regarding infrastructure and trade, and the movement of goods between landlocked countries and ports. One example of a major infrastructure project in Africa was the East African Corridor. Member States queried ECA as to any ongoing infrastructure development projects to further facilitate trade and development. ECA was also queried about the extent of help in trade and services provided to Member States within the context of ECA support to regional economic communities.

5. Delegations expressed the need for the Commission to continue to provide support for the regional integration programmes in Africa being undertaken by the regional economic communities.

6. Delegations also appreciated that, despite the progress made in the areas of trade in goods and services, it had been noted that many challenges to the work in trade facilitation remained, especially owing to the lack of reliable hard infrastructure in the region.

7. Some delegations stressed the need for the Commission and other partners, such as the African Development Bank and the World Bank, to continue to provide support so as to complement the efforts of regional economic communities in infrastructure, in particular the railroad and highway connectivities, as a necessary element for trade facilitation and linkage to other key sectors of the economies, such as agriculture.

8. Views were also expressed as to whether ECA was able to capture the impact of its development projects and whether the indicators of achievement were appropriately measuring how the subprogrammes were accomplishing their objectives. For example, subprogramme 6, Gender and women in development, had indicators that seemed to measure progress and knowledge of women's issues instead of focusing on the objective of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

9. Concern was expressed about the provision by ECA of support to least developed countries, as there was no reference in the biennial programme plan to the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held in Istanbul, Turkey. Member States expressed views about the possibility of strengthening ECA efforts and support to least developed countries, and whether initiatives could be further exploited in that regard. The view was also expressed that ECA should provide equal support to both least developed countries and landlocked developing countries.

10. It was observed that the ECA programme of work should seek to eradicate poverty instead of reducing poverty. Member States queried ECA as to why it had not gone further to include strategies on eliminating poverty altogether in the programme of work.

11. It was also observed that one of the Commission's goals as part of its strategy was to graduate countries to middle-income status. Some delegations sought clarification about the challenges and pitfalls of bringing countries from low- to middle-income status.

12. Member States expressed the view that multiple studies had been carried out under subprogramme 9, Social development policy, and questioned ECA about the need for additional research and studies. The view was expressed that ECA should use existing studies for the implementation of its programme of work.

13. The view was also expressed that ECA was lacking focus on energy issues and that more attention should be given to that area.

14. Member States expressed concern about the changes to the biennial programme plan owing to the restructuring of the organization and that at least a couple paragraphs had not been included in the overall orientation or the strategies of each subprogramme to explain the changes.

15. It was observed that the report referred to consultations on a post-2015 development agenda as one of the reasons for the restructuring of the organization. Member States observed that the consultations were ongoing and questioned how ECA could incorporate the results of the consultations into the programme of work.

16. Member States expressed their views on the importance of accurate statistical data that would enable ECA to plan and implement its programme of work.

17. Some delegations queried ECA on subprogramme 6, Gender and women in development, and its interaction with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, which was not mentioned in the biennial programme plan. Member States also sought clarification about the reference to providing support for gender-sensitive strategies for building and sustaining Africa's digital economy in the context of subprogramme 3, Innovations, technologies and management of Africa's natural resources.

Conclusions and recommendations

18. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly approve the changes to the narrative of programme 15, Economic and social development in Africa, as set out in the report of the Secretary-General (A/68/75).**